

Ray doesn't have long to live, according to brother.

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James Earl Ray is "in pain and will be gone in 24 hours," his brother predicted yesterday.

"I thought when I first went in I would be able to talk to him," Jerry Ray said, shortly after visiting his older brother, the convicted assassin of Martin Luther King Jr. "But he couldn't talk; he was making gagging sounds and he was glassy-eyed.

"I've decided not to put him on any type of life support because he's in too bad shape."

James Earl Ray, 68, is listed in

critical condition with liver failure at Columbia Nashville Memorial Hospital.

Jerry Ray reiterated his family's contention that his brother was framed by the government.

"The FBI can now celebrate. He's in a coma. He can't talk. He can't recognize you."

Jerry Ray said his brother had earlier been diagnosed with cirrhosis, even though he had never been a heavy drinker.

"I'm not going to say he's been an angel, but our family still supports him and believe he's innocent of

killing Martin Luther King."

When he dies, the family plans an autopsy performed by an outside pathologist, his brother said.

"We just want to make sure what he died of, and then we are going have his body cremated and his ashes dropped on top of the FBI office in Washington."

In 1969, James Earl Ray pleaded guilty to King's death in exchange for a guaranteed 99-year sentence, but three days later charged he was "maneuvered" into doing so by his attorney at the time, the late Percy Foreman. ■